

Social Service Professions Act 110 of 1978

**RULES**

**relating to the course of conduct to be followed by social workers in the practising of  
their profession (code of ethics)**

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## GENERAL NOTICES

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Department of National Health and Population Development

No. 292

25 April 1986

### **RULES RELATING TO THE COURSE OF CONDUCT TO BE FOLLOWED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE PRACTISING OF THEIR PROFESSION (CODE OF ETHICS)**

Rules made under Social Work Act, 1978, published as General Notice 292 of 1986 in Government Gazette 10205 of 25 April 1986.

In terms of section 27(1A)(a) of the Social Work Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978), the S A Council for Social Work hereby makes the rules set out in the Schedule hereto.

### SCHEDULE

#### **Definitions**

1. In these rules "the Act" shall mean the Social Work Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978), and any expression to which a meaning has been assigned in the Act shall bear such meaning and, unless the context otherwise indicates -

"*client*" shall mean any person who receives the professional attention of a social worker;

"*colleague*", in relation to a social worker, shall mean any other person also registered as a social worker;

"*community*" a functionally related aggregate of people who lives in a particular area at a particular time, from the social structure and exhibit an awareness of their distinctiveness and own identity as a group;

"*employer*" shall mean any person whosoever employs or provide work for any person and remunerates or expressly or tacitly undertakes to remunerates *him or her*, or who permits any person in any manner to assist *him or her* in the carrying on or the conducting of his business;

"*social work institution*" an employer who is a social worker or who employs social workers to render social work services.

#### **The course of conduct to be followed by social workers**

2. For the purpose of section 27(1A)(a), the conduct set forth in rules 3 to 9 of these Rules shall be deemed to be the course of conduct to be followed by a social worker in the practising of *his or her* profession.

#### **General approach**

3. The general approach in this course of conduct is based on the ethics that -

- (a) every human being has a unique value and potential, irrespective of origin, ethnicity sex, age, beliefs, socio-economic and legal status;
- (b) each individual has the right to the fulfilment of *his or her* innate and acquired skills;
- (c) the social worker has a responsibility to devote *his or her* professional knowledge and skills scientifically for the benefits of each individual, group, community and mankind.
- (d) the social worker has a primary obligation to render services professionally;
- (e) the social worker shall recognise and take into account *his or her* personal and professional limitations.

**Conduct that concerns the profession**

4. Conduct that concerns the social work profession shall mean, *inter alia*, for a social worker to -
- (a) scientifically evaluate and support the profession in order to enhance and raise the dignity and integrity of the profession;
  - (b) challenge unacceptable social work practices and uphold those that are acceptable;
  - (c) protect the profession from unfounded criticism which would bring it into disrepute;
  - (d) remain actively involved with the formulation, development, determination and implementation of professional policy;
  - (e) base social work practices on scientific knowledge, keep abreast of relevant developments and participate in research.

**Conduct that concerns a client**

5. Conduct that concerns a client shall mean, *inter alia*, for a social worker to -
- (a) recognise the uniqueness of each client;
  - (b) maintain a professional relationship with the client;
  - (c) acknowledge the right to self-determination of the client;
  - (d) take into account the client's rights, preferences and objectives when structuring service-rendering, even in the absence of the client;
  - (e) strive towards the client's optimal use of *his or her* abilities;
  - (f) respect the client's right to decide whether or not to co-operate with the social worker, even in the case of a statutory order;
  - (g) maintain the client's right to confidentiality;
  - (h) not refuse service-rendering to a client, irrespective of whether or not the client is in a position to pay the fees for such services;
  - (i) inform the client of and prepare *him or her* for any decision regarding the termination of service rendering.

**Conduct that concerns a colleague or another professional person**

6. Conduct that concerns a colleague or another professional person shall mean, *inter alia*, for a social worker to -
- (a) respect and honour the training and service-rendering of colleagues and other professional persons;
  - (b) respect the trust that exists between colleagues;
  - (c) resolve criticism of and differences between colleagues in terms of the authority structure of the employer(s);
  - (d) protect and defend colleagues against unfair criticism;
  - (e) promote opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and experience between colleagues and other professional persons.

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**Conduct that concerns an employer**

7. Conduct that concerns an employer shall mean, *inter alia*, for a social worker to acknowledge and honour *his or her* employer's authority as far as it is compatible with this course of conduct.

**Conduct that concerns a social work institution**

8. Conduct that concerns a social work institution shall mean, *inter alia*, for a social worker to co-operate with those social work institutions whose policies, procedures and operations are directed towards adequate service-rendering and encouragement of professional practices consistent with this course of conduct.

**Conduct that concerns the community**

9. Conduct that concerns the community shall mean, *inter alia*, for a social worker to -
- a) enhance and promote service-rendering to the community under all circumstances by utilising and developing resources in the community;
  - b) have the responsibility to be aware of, initiate, develop and change social policy consistent with professional practices.

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